

# **Northeastern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council**

Thursday, May 15, 2014

*Battle Mountain District Office*

*50 Bastian Road, Battle Mountain, Nevada*

## **RAC Attendance**

Jeff White, Chairman	(1) Energy/Minerals
Kevin Lee	(1) Transportation
Jack Prier	(2) Environmental
Jeremy Lutz	(3) State Agency
R. Jeff Williams	(3) Elected Official
William Wolf	(3) Public At Large

## **Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Representatives Present:**

Rosemary Thomas	District Manager – Ely
Jill Silvey	District Manager – Elko
Karen Weiss	Associate District Manager – Battle Mountain
Adam Cochran	Resource Management Specialist – Battle Mountain
Ethan Ellsworth	Biologist – Battle Mountain
Dustin Fowler	Rangeland Management Specialist – Battle Mountain
Juan Martinez	Contracting Officer Representative – Battle Mountain
Sheyleie Mortensen	Contractor – Battle Mountain
William O'Neill	Wildlife Biologist – Battle Mountain
Crystal Cowan	Public Affairs Officer - Elko

## **Members of the Public Present**

Dylan Harris	Elko Daily Free Press
Ross Andreson	Elko Daily Free Press
Eric Pettock	Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Meeting began at 8 a.m. at the Battle Mountain District Office with welcome and introductions.

**Reason for Meeting:** The intent of the RAC field tour was to showcase cooperative work between the BLM, NDOW, USGS, University of Nevada Reno, industry, and permitted livestock grazing within high-value sage-grouse habitat. The RAC toured portions of Grass Valley and the McGinness Hills Geothermal Plant (Ormat), where sage-grouse monitoring, mitigation, and habitat enhancement projects were highlighted. Grass Valley contains some of

the most important sage-grouse habitat in central Nevada, and ensuring the long-term viability of sage-grouse populations is a primary management focus of the BLM and NDOW.

**Housekeeping:** Crystal Cowan made a point of field going procedures, and ensured that all field-goers understood their travel vouchers, and where they would be able to take bathroom breaks.

**Field Tour:** The group made four stops out on the field tour. First, Tim Coward gave an overview and went into a brief history of the McGinness Hills Geothermal Power Plant and associated greater sage-grouse mitigation. Second, the RAC were given a tour of portions of the McGinness Hills Geothermal Power Plant. Representatives from Ormat provided an overview of the geothermal resource, plant design, engineering, and power generation capacity. Third, the RAC visited the Callaghan Hills habitat treatment area where Bootstraps were preparing to initiate pinyon-juniper (PJ) removal as part of the McGinness Hills sage-grouse mitigation. An overview of the Bootstraps Program was provided by Rod Davis and Mike Stamm (University of Nevada, Reno). The Bootstraps program is designed to help at-risk young men and women return to school and/or gain meaningful work while engaging in important habitat restoration activities on public and private land. The Bootstraps programs helps the employees obtain driver's licenses and GEDs while conducting labor-intensive activities such as PJ cutting. Finally, the group finished with lunch and engaged in a discussion about sage-grouse priority habitat, habitat projects including PJ thinning, and ramifications of future sage-grouse listing as a Threatened or Endangered Species.

**Public Comments:** There were not any public comments at this time.

#### **Questions/Answers:**

Q: Where do recommendations go?

A: Recommendations go to the Secretary of the Interior and the District Managers for review. They can be written, given in a formal meeting, informal, teleconference, etc.

Q: Are there any reports to work on this year?

A: There will be some Joint RAC recommendations. The reports will focus mainly on range management due to the drought, sage-grouse habitat, and possibly Wild Horses and Burros (WHB).

Q: Are there any sub-groups?

A: There is a Recreational Unit, the Tri-RAC subcommittee, and a small group working on the BMDO Resource Management Plan (RMP) Revision although it's been put on hold.

Q: Overview of McGinness Hills?

A: It is a two phased geothermal power plant. The first phase is completed and is creating energy; the second phase has been permitted and is underway. The proponent has been asked to paint the plant the color of sagebrush; however, it is actually an off-green color. The power plant is probably around twenty acres of facility and accessories such as wells, etc.

Q: Sage-grouse Habitat Affected?

A: There are active leks within a three mile buffer from the project site. When in the construction phase, there were noise and seasonal restrictions in those buffer zones to ensure that the habitat wasn't affected. For mitigation of sage-grouse and mule deer, the proponent and NDOW have provided funds (\$600,000+) for the BLM and NDOW to spend on mitigation measures that

protect or restore critical resources. In addition, the USGS has been contracted to monitor sage-grouse populations and movements.

Q: How did they arrange their power lines?

A: The proponent agreed to place their power lines within the buffer of the leks, and without disturbing cultural zones. They agreed to put their power lines along an existing Right-of-Way (ROW).

**Action Items:**

RAC will get copies of meeting minutes, current membership, and upcoming meeting information to Jeff Williams, county commissioner of Elko.

Next meeting will be scheduled for August 28, 2014.